

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 EURE-00 /098 W
-----191748Z 010071 /50

P R 191650Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1890
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 11438

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR FT FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH COMMENT ON DJIBOUTI

1. DURING CALL BY CONSUL GENERAL WALTER CLARK AND
EMBOFF ON APRIL 19, THE PRIME MINISTER'S COORDINATOR
FOR THE FTAL, JEAN-JACQUES ROBERT, SAID THAT THE
CHARACTER OF THE GOVERNMENT CHOSEN FOLLOWING THE
MAY 8 FTAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WILL DETERMINE WHETHER
FRANCE WILL CONCLUDE COOPERATION AGREEMENTS WITH AN
INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI. IF THE GOVERNMENT IS REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION AND THEREFORE APPEARS
CAPABLE OF MINIMIZING CIVIL DISTURBANCES, THE FRENCH
REMAIN READY TO MAINTAIN SOME 4,000 TROOPS IN DJIBOUTI
AND TO CONCLUDE A FULL
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RANGE OF COOPERATION ACCORDS. ON THE OTHER HAND,
SHOULD THE ELECTIONS PRODUCE A GOVERNMENT THAT
REPRESENTS ONLY THE PREDOMINANT ISSAS, FRANCE WILL
PULL OUT, ALTHOUGH, IN ANY CASE, TROOPS WILL REMAIN
UNTIL DJIBOUTI HAD BEEN ADMITTED TO THE OAU AND THE
UN, PRESUMABLY IN SEPTEMBER.

2. ROBERT SAID THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE SINGLE ELECTORAL LIST NOW BEING DRAWN UP BY THE VARIOUS FACTIONS IN DJIBOUTI WILL GIVE AN EXCELLENT PREVIEW OF HOW THE GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BE CONSTITUTED. THE DEADLINE FOR FILING SUCH LISTS IS APRIL 23. THE FRENCH DO NOT YET HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION TO PREDICT WHAT COMPROMISES MAY BE MADE. THE BEST OUTCOME WOULD BE FOR THE LIST TO INCLUDE SUPPORTERS OF HASSAN GOULED, ALI AREF AND ABDULLAH KAMIL (ALTHOUGH THE ELIMINATION OF THE LATTER WOULD NOT BE TOO BAD SINCE KAMIL HAS LITTLE GRASS-ROOTS SUPPORT). THIS WOULD REFLECT A COMPROMISE WHEREBY THE GROUPS ALREADY HAD AGREED TO GOULED'S BECOMING PRESIDENT AND AREF'S ASSUMING THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP, THUS INSURING THE SUPPORT OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF AFARS AND ISSAS FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

3. THE SECOND, AND WORST ALTERNATIVE, ROBERT CONTINUED, WOULD BE A LIST FROM WHICH AREF'S FOLLOWERS

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PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 EURE-00 /098 W
-----191747Z 010136 /50

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WERE EXCLUDED, THUS MAKING IT ALMOST CERTAIN THAT MOST AFARS WOULD BE OPPOSED TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT. SUCH A RESULT ALSO WOULD STRENGTHEN THE ETHIOPIAN TEMPTATION TO TRY TO ESTABLISH A GREATER AFAR STATE, INCLUDING AFARS FROM THE FTAI, ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA, AND BEHOLDEN TO ADDIS. THIS HYPOTHETICALLY WOULD GIVE ETHIOPIA ACCESS TO THE SEA THROUGH ASSAB IN THE EXPECTATION THAT SOUTHERN ERITREA WOULD BE DETACHED FROM THE NORTH, WHICH MIGHT WIN ITS AUTONOMY OR INDEPENDENCE, AND ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT DJIBOUTI WOULD NEVER BE A SECURE PORT FOR ETHIOPIA, EVEN WERE IT TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE.

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4. A THIRD POSSIBILITY WOULD BE A LIST INCLUDING ALI AREF FOLLOWERS (I.E., CANDIDATES SUPPORTED BY MOST AFARS) AND LEADERS OF THE SMALLER, NON-ISSA BUT ETHNICALLY SOMALI TRIBES, AND EXCLUDING GOULED. SUCH A LIST WOULD REPRESENT A MAJORITY OF THE TOTAL POPULATION AND WOULD AT LEAST HOLD OUT THE POSSIBILITY FOR FUTURE ISSA PARTICIPATION. IN THIS SITUATION, THE FRENCH WOULD HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT DECISION ABOUT THEIR FUTURE ROLE.

5. COMMENT: ROBERT EXPRESSED THE CURRENT FRENCH POSITION VERY DIRECTLY. SHOULD THE ELECTIONS FALL NICELY INTO THE WORST OR BEST CASE CATEGORY, FRENCH POLICY SEEMS CLEAR. BUT THE ELECTIONS MAY NOT PRODUCE SUCH A NEAT RESULT, IN WHICH CASE THE FUTURE FRENCH PRESENCE WOULD HAVE TO BE DETERMINED AGAIN. IN THIS SITUATION, GIVEN THE POTENTIAL POLITICAL LIABILITIES AT HOME OF FOLLOWING A POLICY WHICH COULD SERIOUSLY ENDANGER FRENCH LIVES, THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, WE BELIEVE, WOULD TEND TO OPT FOR WITHDRAWAL.
HARLAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PARIS11438
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770135-1296
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770442/aaaabknf.tel
Line Count: 160
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 75e3b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2763726
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH COMMENT ON DJIBOUTI
TAGS: PFOR, FT, FR, US, (CLARK, WALTER), (ROBERT, JEAN-JACQUES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/75e3b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009